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## SAMUEL WENDELL WILLISTON

### A KANSAS TRIBUTE

Kansas has lost one of her foremost educators and the University of Chicago has lost one of its earnest and faithful professors in the death of Doctor Williston. He died on August 30, 1918, following an operation.

Doctor Williston was born in Boston, of New England stock, on July 10, 1852. He came, with his family, to Kansas in the early days of the making of the state and settled in Wabaunsee county and as this is near Manhattan it was natural that as soon as his course was completed at the public schools he should continue his work at the Kansas State Agricultural College, then in its infancy. There he graduated, with the degree of B.S. in 1872, and obtained his master's degree in 1875.

In the continuation of his studies he began a course in medicine at Yale University, where he graduated with the degree of M.D. in 1880. Continuing his scientific studies he obtained the degree of Ph.D. in 1885. While studying at Yale with Doctor O. C. Marsh he was assistant in paleontology, and laid the foundation of his broad knowledge of this subject, in which he later became so eminent an authority. For one year, 1886, he was assistant editor of "Science," an avocation which showed the broadness of his culture. He was also health officer for the city of New Haven from 1887 to 1889. From 1886 to 1890 he occupied the position of professor of anatomy at Yale University, following which he was elected professor of geology and anatomy and dean of the School of Medicine of the University of Kansas, and much of his best scientific work was done from 1890 to 1902 while he occupied this position. He was elected professor of vertebrate paleontology at the University of Chicago in 1902, which position he occupied at the time of his death.

While in Kansas Doctor Williston was appointed a member of the State Board of Health, and it was here that he showed his enthusiasm for work in behalf of the health of the community and his ability to get things done by injecting new life into this body. Since that time it has occupied a very enviable position and has ranked as one of the most efficient and progressive of the State Boards of Health.

Doctor Williston was also a member of the State Board of Medical Examiners in 1901-1902. He was a member of the Kansas Academy of Science and its president in 1907—and national president of the scientific society of Sigma Xi in 1901-1904, and a member of many learned scientific societies both in this country and abroad.

Those of us who have known Doctor Williston and have been intimately associated with him in his scientific work are unanimous in our appreciation of his broad learning, his knowledge of foreign languages and literature, his indefatigable enthusiasm for science, and his vigorous defense of what he believed to be right.

Doctor Williston began the study of the geology and paleontology of Kansas as early as 1874, while with Doctor B. F. Mudge at the Kansas Agricultural College. He spent over three years in field explorations within the state. For more than twelve years he was engaged in collecting material which, in connection with the collections of fossils made by Doctor F. H. Snow and Judge E. P. West, are used in the preparation of the Vertebrate Paleontology of Kansas as published in volumes IV and VI of the University Geological Survey of Kansas. The volumes are illustrated by a series of cuts prepared under Doctor Williston's direction, which are remarkable for their accuracy and perfection. In discussing this work the author says: "It is the aim in the present and following volumes so to picture and describe the fossils of the state that they may be understood by the ordinary reader of intelligence. But at the same time it is imperatively necessary that the descriptions should be accurate, and accuracy can only be obtained by the use of scientific language." Doctor Williston has done more than any other man to place the rich fields of vertebrate paleontology in Kansas before the scientific world.

An insight into the fairness and justice of Dr. Williston's character in all work of this kind is shown by his care to acknowledge the services of those who have helped to make it a success. He very frequently suggested and outlined work for the younger men which he was glad to have them publish in their own names. They, of course, acknowledged the assistance he had given them.

Besides the work above described Doctor Williston made numerous discoveries and has written many monographs on the Cretaceous mosasaurs, pterodactyls and plesiosaurs, and on the various Permian and Triassic vertebrates. In his chosen field he stood among the first men in the world, and was in intimate correspondence with the most famous continental geologist. His reputation was international.

The writer had some opportunity to know something of Doctor Williston's success in the management of scientific collecting parties, as it was his privilege in 1899 to accompany Doctor Williston, E. C. Case, H. T. Martin and others on an expedition to the Freezeout Mountains in Wyoming. It was a scientific stimulus to see Doctor Williston work early and late to provide for the camp, and to make the most of the opportunity for digging out the fossil reptiles of this inhospitable region. He was a very successful and enthusiastic collector, in Colorado, Dakota, Wyoming and Texas, as well as in Kansas. While working for Doctor Marsh, of Yale, it is related that on one occasion, when Doctor Williston had made an exceptional find in his exploration and showed it to Doctor Marsh, the latter, in his enthusiasm, pulled his valuable watch from his pocket and gave it to him as an expression of his appreciation of the work. This watch has always been kept as a prized relic in the Williston family.

It was not only as a paleontologist that Doctor Williston obtained a world-wide reputation, but his researches in entomology and especially upon the family Diptera, show his indefatigable ability for research. His book on the diptera of North America is a standard, both in this country and abroad.

As a teacher of science, not only in New Haven but also in the University of Kansas and the University of Chicago, Dr. Williston always carried with him the enthusiasm of his students. They knew that he would give them every encouragement and that he would generously contribute from his own store of information for their advancement. Some of his loyal students who received their inspiration from association with him and who have since attained a high standing in their profession are such men as Case of Ann Arbor, Riggs of the Field Museum, Rodgers of Leland Stanford, and Douthitt and Moore of the University of Kansas, Barnum Brown of the American Museum, New York, Sellards of Florida, Moodie of the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Chicago, G. I. Adams of Pekin, China, Beede of Indiana and Branson of Oberlin.

We shall always miss his hearty hand-shake and kindly greeting, his inspiring conversation of men and things scientific, and his vigorous personality, but at the same time we can but feel that he has not passed away without leaving an impress on the scholarship of the world, and adding a large chapter to our knowledge of the secrets of Nature.

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